SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

18th Year of Publication
The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Volume XVIII, No.5 P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 March 15, 1988

Privatization Proposal Brings NIH's Friends Rushing to Help

Privatization of the intramural program of the National Institutes of Health, soon to be proposed by a Presidential commission, would be so offensive to the historic partnership between government and the medical sciences that it faces formidable opposition and scant prospect of success.

Nonetheless, the privatization scheme has concentrated attention on NIH's declining ability to compete for talent in the national biomedical enterprise that, ironically, is booming with lavish support from NIH. Symbolized by the continuing loss of star staff members to rich medical schools and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, the decline is viewed with great alarm by a wide and diverse circle of proven friends of NIH.

These include senior staff members at the Office of Management and Budget who, despite OMB's ogre reputation, are in the vanguard of efforts to protect the government's biomedical research enterprise. Looking on attentively are NIH's many influential friends in Congress, which devotedly treats NIH as a special ward of the legislative branch, exempt from White House budget frugality and ideological interference.

The privatization plan applies only to NIH's inhouse activities, virtually all of which are located on or near the Bethesda, Md., campus. With some 6500 intramural staff members, and about a $660-million budget this

New Sniping at Super Collider—P. 6
NAS Names Japan Office Head—P. 8

year, the Bethesda research complex is the biggest, richest, and most esteemed in the world of biomedical research. Almost unique among agencies of the federal government, it draws criticism only for not doing more of what it is already doing.

After the privatization proposal was leaked to the *New York Times* last December, David K. Kleinberg, the OMB Associate Director for health-related programs, urged the Department of Health and Human Services to engage the Institute of Medicine to study the problems of NIH. The contractual paperwork for such matters is moving at the Department's customarily glacial pace. But the IOM, a wing of the National Academy of Sciences, has informally agreed to accept the assignment and is now asking around the biomedical grapevine for suggestions for membership on the study group.

In testimony on March 3 to the House Appropriations Subcommittee for NIH, Director James B. Wyngaarden

(Continued on page 3)

Social Scientists Say They've Lost Ground in Federal Funds

Cheerfully oblivious of the despondence that hangs over fiscal affairs in Washington, the mandarins of the soft sciences complained last week that federal funding for their disciplines has "followed a roller-coaster-like track"—mostly downward in recent times, they said. They expressed confidence that matters could be set right by adding $240 million a year to their current research allotment of $780 million.

This politically ethereal prescription was issued by the Committee on Basic Research in the Behaviorial and Social Sciences, a 21-member group convened by the National Academy of Sciences, initially at the request of

(Continued on page 2)

In Brief

A deep secret in White House budgetmaking is the difference between an agency's desires and the amount requested from Congress. With NIH, however, it all comes out in the annual appropriations ritual with its friends on Capitol Hill. Under questioning from Subcommittee Chairman William Natcher (D-Ky.), NIH Director James Wyngaarden provided the odyssey: NIH request to the Public Health Service: $8.4 billion; PHS to the Department of Health and Human Services, $6.9 billion; HHS to OMB, $6.2 billion. OMB to Congress, $6.5 billion—a 5.4 percent increase over the current budget. Natcher quipped that he favors $10 billion.

Plans for a privately financed residence for families of pediatric patients at the NIH Clinical Center are moving along with the assistance of a group of Congressional wives. Called the Children's Inn at NIH, the building, with about 35 units, will be on a site north of the Center; the cost is estimated at $2-3 million.

The President of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers has expressed "outrage" at reports that the Naval Air Systems Command is employing contractors who are paying $7.29 an hour, including benefits, for "degreed optical, electrical, and mechanical engineers." Calling for an inquiry by OMB, President Russell C. Drew asked IEEE members to report other "unusually low hourly rates negotiated under government service contracts."

Roland W. Schmitt, Chairman of the National Science Board (NSB) and close ally of NSF Director Erich Bloch in the remaking of the Foundation, became President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on March 1. Schmitt recently retired from a 31-year career at GE, where he was Senior Vice President for Science and Technology. His NSB appointment expires in May.

. . . Support Down 25 Percent Since 1972, Study Finds

(Continued from page 1)

the National Science Foundation. Co-Chaired by R. Duncan Luce, Professor of Psychology and Social Relations, Harvard, and Neil J. Smelser, Professor of Sociology, UC, Berkeley, the study eventually turned into a behemoth undertaking stretching over three years. Its findings and recommendations may not be remarkable, but as an enterprise in information-gathering overkill, it merits renown in the beaverish culture of Washington committees.

The Luce-Smelser Committee drew direct support from eight federal agencies and private foundations, for a total of $935,000. It sought the views of 2400 researchers and administrators, and "we further broadcast our appeal for assistance to 150 journals." This process brought in "detailed replies from about 600 researchers, who identified more than 1000 topics or lines of research, many of them overlapping, and gave us more than 2000 names to consider."

From the tonnage that flowed in from this cast of thousands, the Committee, employing unstated criteria, mercifully rejected "some ideas that appeared idiosyncratic or marginal." From the survivors, 31 topics were selected and assigned to working groups of five to eleven members. "Some six months later we received back 31 concise papers on research opportunities and needs."

These range across the spectrum of the social and behavioral sciences, under headings that include "Seeing and Hearing," "Behavior and Health," "Jobs, Wages, and Careers," "Science, Technology, and Public Policy," and "Designs for Data Collection." By and large, they are straightforward reports of current activities in the disciplines, along with descriptions of lines of inquiry that are considered promising.

The hard sell comes in two concluding chapters and an appendix that stress the theme that in recent years, the social and behavioral sciences have fared worse than the other sciences in receipts of federal support for research and training. The "changes in support for behavioral and social sciences," the study asserts, "are starkly different from those for other disciplines . . . " In constant dollars, it continues, federal support for the other fields rose 36 percent between 1972 and 1987. But for the social and behavioral sciences, "The 1987 level of support was 25 percent lower than the level of 1972." Making the "roller-coaster" analogy, the report states:

> In constant 1987 dollars, federal support [for the social and behavioral sciences] declined from just over $1 billion in 1972 to $873 million in 1975, increased to a peak of about $1.1 billion in 1978 and 1979, fell sharply through 1982 to a low of $705 million, then rebounded somewhat to the current level of $778 million . . . . The total is 4.6 percent of all federal expenditures for basic and applied research (about $16.8 billion). This percentage is a decline from a figure of 8 percent in 1972 and about 7 percent that was maintained (with some year-to-year fluctuations) from 1973 to 1979.

To this dark portrait of the federal situation, the report appends a gloomy note on private philanthropy, which was the mainstay of the social and behavioral sciences prior to the arrival of major government support. Private support now amounts to about $60 million, or 8 percent, of federal funds, and much of it is concentrated on "short-term selective program funding that injects significant resources for limited periods . . . "

Proposed solution: New funding of $240 million a year, to "be achieved within three or four years." The Committee said that the growth should be "clearly weighted toward what is usually classified as basic research, and," deftly avoiding a provocation to internecine warfare, it added that "the favorable opportunities lie more in some portfolios than in others." But it gave no hints about choice. NSF, it said, should provide $60 million of the increase, with $80 million coming from NIH and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration. The rest would be "divided among other departments and agencies and private sources."

For assessing the plan's political feasibility, it should be noted that the proposed $60 million *increase* in NSF's social and behavioral research spending comes close to the Foundation's current spending in this area: $43.7 million for behavioral and neural sciences and $30.1 million for social and economic science.

***The Behavioral and Social Sciences: Achievements and Opportunties* (282 pp., $29.50), National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20418; tel. 202/334-3313.**

Another publication, from a different source, provides a detailed analysis of the proposed fiscal 1989 federal budget for these disciplines. It's the March 4 issue of *COSSA Washington Update* (32 pp., $3.00), newsletter of the Consortium of Social Science Associations, 1625 I St. NW, Suite 911, Washington, DC 20006; 202/887-6166.

ISSN 0048-9581

© Science & Government Report, Inc., 1988

Editor and Publisher
Daniel S. Greenberg

Associate Publisher
Wanda J. Reif

European Correspondent
Francois Seguier (Paris)

Independently published by *Science & Government Report, Inc.*, twice monthly, except once each in January, July, August, and September. Annual subscription: Institutions, $225.00 (two years, $395.00). Information about bulk and individual rates upon request. Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St. N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second-class postage at Washington, D.C. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on University Microfilms International. Claims for missing back issues will be filled without charge if made within six weeks of publication date.

. . . Proposals Due Soon from Presidential Commission

(Continued from page 1)
cautiously noted that the Department has been "encouraged [by OMB] to consider a wide range of strategies for assuring the continued scientific excellence of the intramural program, and was advised to ask the Institute of Medicine to undertake a 4-5-month study of the options." Wyngaarden said that the IOM has been asked to report by June 1.

The NIH privatization scheme is included among a number of proposals due this week from the President's Commission on Privatization. The Commission, which is supposed to provide the domestic centerpiece for the final year of the Reagan Administration, is ideologically inspired by the eternal conservative quest for reducing the size of the federal government. NIH thus got swept up with the Postal Service, federal housing, government-backed mortgages, the national air-traffic control system, and so forth as candidates for privatization.

On the Rockefeller Model?

What that might mean in the case of NIH is unclear, though there has been informal talk about organizing a consortium of public and private supporters for running NIH along the lines of the Rockefeller Institute before it was transformed into Rockefeller University. There's also been talk of maintaining federal support but contracting out the management to a non-government organization, *a la* the Department of Energy's style of operation with its big laboratories. Oak Ridge, for example, is currently operated for DOE by Martin Marietta, and Argonne is run by the University of Chicago. As privately operated institutions, the so-called contract laboratories have considerably more flexibility than pure federal establishments for setting salaries and working conditions.

Another model under discussion is the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the Pentagon's own medical school, whose statutory charter provides a variety of exemptions from the limitations in federal pay scales. USU, across the road from NIH, thrives in the unique position of federal support without federal pay restrictions.

In any case, though no detailed formula has been made public for the operations of a privatized NIH, the imminence of a serious recommendation has energized NIH's friends anew to seek relief for its difficulties. They do not share the privatization motive of reducing federal expenditures. Rather, the privatization issue has coincided with growing fears that a fragile scientific treasure is under serious threat. Though positions are still fluid, an underlying consensus holds that NIH is eroding under the present rules of support and management and that a politically ingenious formula must be devised to save it.

The strongest argument against privatization is that NIH, for all its difficulties, is a great institution and should serve as a model and inspiration for federal service, rather than as a signal that scientific quality cannot thrive within government.

Wyngaarden used the occasion of his latest annual appearance before the House Appropriations Subcommittee to emphasize NIH's losses in the biomedical marketplace. Easing into the subject through the customary recitation of recent achievements in research sponsored by NIH, he told of the work of Michael Zasloff, of the National Institute of Child Health and Development, who discovered a natural anti-infection agent on the skin of frogs. Wyngaarden continued:

> Our pleasure in referring to this exciting development is moderated by the fact that Dr. Zasloff will be leaving the NIH intramural program to join the faculty of the University of Pennyslvania. While many factors usually contribute to such decisions, our ability to retain leading investigators is seriously compromised by the widening gap in the salaries and other benefits available to our senior scientists, together with various federal administrative requirements, as compared with their counterparts in the academic community.
>
> The Office of Management and Budget has taken note of the federal administrative controls and procedures, including personnel procedures, space allocation procedures, Congressional requirements, and the widening salary gap, that limit the capacity of the NIH intramural research program to sustain its distinguished record of scientific achievement and excellence. If the extraordinary accomplishment of the NIH intramural laboratories is to be assured over the long term, solutions must be found to these administrative barriers.

Staff Losses to Universities

Sympathizing with Wyngaarden, members of the Subcommittee took note of another recently announced staff departure, that of Marc Lipman, of the Cancer Institute, who is going to Georgetown University's Vincent T. Lombardi Cancer Research Center. Reference was made to reports that Robert Gallo, also of the Cancer Institute, would not, after recently reported negotiations, be going to Johns Hopkins University. Wyngaarden responded, "We don't know if that's over yet."

The reality of NIH's difficulties in the biomedical economy is that it is the principal source of finance for its academic competitors. They are the biggest recipients of the $5.5 billion of the NIH budget that is spent off campus. The departees from NIH employment go to research programs that draw upon a variety of funding

(Continued on page 4)

Hearing, Rehabilitation Institutes Proposed for NIH

Health lobbies are again focusing their expansionist dreams on the National Institutes of Health, which remains as opposed as ever to adding new bastions to its present collection of facilities.

Bills for a new institute, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, have been introduced in the House (HR 3361) by Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.) and in the Senate (S 1727) by Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). The proposed institute would be taken from the existing National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke.

A bill for a National Center for Rehabilitation Medicine (HR 4013) has been introduced by Rep. Doug Walgren (D-Pa.). A companion bill is said to be on the way from Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). In the NIH hierarchy, a freestanding research Center is an organizational notch below an Institute. At present, there's only one such Center at NIH, the National Center for Nursing Research, though there are all sorts of other "centers" on the NIH campus.

Under Congressional pressure, the NIH management in 1986 reluctantly accepted the Nursing Center as an alternative to setting up a full-fledged Institute for Nursing Research. The last Institute to be added was Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, which was split off the same year from what now stands as the Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

The establishment of additional institutes has been strongly opposed by the NIH management, which long has had difficult times with health lobbies getting their own bases on the Bethesda campus and using them to promote their own research agendas. Congressmen, on the other hand, genuinely believe NIH needs prodding to work on disease rather than science. In addition, proposals for new institutes greatly please the constituents.

Testifying March 3 at the opening of House hearings on the NIH budget, Director James B. Wyngaarden said that NIH's parent agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, has not yet stated its position on the proposed additions. But Wyngaarden, who strongly resisted the Arthritis and Nursing campaigns, was ready with one of the major arguments against expansionism: We're already doing it. Hearing research, he said, now receives about $50 million a year in support, and about $107 million is expended on rehabilitation.

The issues were not pursued at the appropriations hearing. Additions to NIH are in the jurisdiction of the House Environment and Commerce Committee, where Rep. Henry Waxman's Health and Environment Subcommittee heard about the Rehabilitation Center on March 4. In the Senate, the focal point is the Labor and Human Resources Committee, chaired by Kennedy.

. . . *Pay Supplements Help, But Academe Remains Far Ahead*

(Continued from page 3)

arrangements, but the financial bedrock of biomedical science in America is the beleaguered NIH; without it, the biomedical economy would wilt.

While NIH clearly lags behind its competitors in remunerating the superstars of science, it does benefit from several important exemptions from the general rules of federal pay. Salaries at the top of the federal pyramid—for the Senior Executive Service—range from $64,700 to $75,500. Physicians are eligible for a $10,000 supplement, soon to be raised to $20,000. And opportunities for outside income have been expanded in recent years.

Consulting income of $25,000 a year is permitted, provided that no more than $12,500 comes from any one organization. Lecture fees may also amount to $25,000, with a $2000 limit on any one lecture. Royalties from patents may amount to $100,000 per year per invention. And there's no limit on income from teaching or writing. Physicians may engage in private clinical practice of up to 400 hours per year.

NIH researchers are thus allowed to forage for additional income, and many do so quite successfully. But these income opportunities are also available to academic scientists, who also usually benefit from bigger salaries and tuition remission for their children. Wyngaarden testified that a recent survey found that the mean salary for members of the Senior Executive Service at NIH was 46 percent of non-government salaries for comparable positions.

Cramped conditions in NIH laboratories have been somewhat relieved by an ongoing renovation and construction program, following years of neglect of the Bethesda facilities. And NIH's friends in OMB have worked to provide NIH with flexibility under the federal government's maddening off-and-on freezes on hiring employees.

The privatization proposal can easily be regarded as a threat to biomedical research within the federal government. But NIH and its many political supporters recognize it as a timely opportunity for maintaining the greatness of the institution. —DSG

In Print: Small Business R&D, State Programs, Etc.

Small Business Involvement in Federal Research and Development (GAO/RCED-88-90BR; 21 pp., no charge), by the General Accounting Office, reports that, with several exceptions, federal labs have responded poorly to the 1986 Presidential directive to promote technology transfer to small business firms. GAO reports that an official of the National Cancer Institute "expressed a concern that the laboratory might be overwhelmed with requests as companies become more interested in technology transfer opportunities." Also, USDA's Northern Regional Research Center reports that it has "no officially designated technology transfer specialist."

US GAO, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877; tel. 202/275-6241.

•

State Government Strategies for Self-Assessment of Science and Technology Programs for Economic Development (14 pp., no charge), report of a meeting, April 1987, sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Governors Association. Among the observations: State officials "view the degree of industry involvement as a vote of confidence," and promises of big and fast results are both tempting and perilous.

NAS, Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable, 2101 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20418; tel. 202/334-3486.

•

Science and Technology Data Book 1988 (51 pp., no charge), pocket-size annual, produced by NSF, contains data on R&D spending, manpower, patents, international R&D comparisons, etc.

NSF, Division of Science Resources Studies, 1800 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20550; tel. 202/634-4634.

•

Science Agenda, newly launched quarterly newsletter of the Science Directorate of the American Psychological Association (8 pp., no charge), covers issues of interest to the trade (eg, NIMH, NIH, and NSF programs, animal welfare, APA affairs.)

APA, Science Directorate, 1200 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; tel. 202/955-7653.

•

Science Achievement in Seventeen Countries (125 pp., Pergamon Press; single copies available without charge from NSF), preliminary report from the first international study since 1970 conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, an association of research centers whose evaluations covered grades 4 or 5, 8 or 9, and secondary senior year. Comment on the US: "The achievement of advanced science students in biology, chemistry, and physics is low. The biology results are especially low. For a technologically advanced country, it would appear that a reexamination of how science is presented and studied is required."

NSF, Studies and Program Assessment, 1800 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20550; tel. 202/357-7425.

•

ScienceWriters, quarterly newsletter of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW), contains news, analysis, gripes, and handwringing about the science-writing business, plus job listings.

Heretofore available only to NASW members, but now a sample copy will be provided gratis, along with information about eligibility for membership and subscription rates for non-members. NASW, PO Box 294, Greenlawn, NY 11740; tel. 516/757-5664.

Engineers See Enrollment Dip

From a forthcoming report to the Engineering Deans Council of the American Society for Engineering Education by the Task Force on Student Pipeline, chaired by J. Ray Bowen, Dean of the College of Engineering, University of Washington.

•

The demographic projection of a 22 percent decline in the total number of high school graduates between 1982 and 1991 suggests that substantial declines in enrollment in engineering colleges in 38 states are likely to occur. There is further reason for concern because of the concentration of major engineering colleges in states which will have declines in the college-age population that are greater than the national average. Underscoring these issues, recent data [show] a sharp drop in the number of freshmen selecting engineering for concentration . . . .

The decline in content and standards in the elementary and secondary schools, particularly in the sciences, mathematics, foreign languages, and communications skills, is now resulting in the matriculation in college of students who are not adequately prepared for engineering study.

The potential for the participation of Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans in the engineering profession remains largely untapped. These minorities are greatly underrepresented in the engineering college applicant pool and have, among engineering students, a higher than average attrition rate.

The participation of women in both the engineering profession and engineering studies, even with the dramatic increases of the recent past, still falls short of the potential levels of involvement. One impediment appears to be the low participation of women students in the study of mathematics and the sciences in the secondary schools.

SSC Foe Collects Criticisms from Industry R&D Chiefs

Hitting a vulnerable point—the claim that the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) will contribute to American industrial strength—Rep. Don Ritter (R-Pa.) has been collecting statements from senior industrial research managers who say it isn't so.

Ritter, in the vanguard of anti-SSC opposition on Capitol Hill, has solicited comments on the SSC through the Industrial Research Institute (IRI), whose 250 members include most of industry's big-league R&D performers. The Congressman's survey is a model of non-scientific opinion taking, but that doesn't reduce the hurt for SSC's wobbly fortunes.

As of March 8, Ritter reported, 19 IRI members had replied to his inquiry about the desirability of building the $4.2-billion accelerator, with fifteen of them expressing opposition. Two of the four in favor, he said, were from states still in the running for SSC.

According to Ritter, anti-SSC responses were received from:

C. K. N. Patel, Executive Director, Research, Materials Science, Engineering, and Academic Affairs Division, AT&T Bell Labs

Richard I. Mateles, Vice President Research, Stauffer Chemical Co.

F. Thomas Krotine, Senior Vice President, Corporate R&D, The Sherwin-Williams Co.

J. J. Wise, Vice President-Research, Mobil R&D Corp.

Patrick J. Carroll, Director, Corporate R&D, Machinery and Defense Operations, FMC Corp.

John N. Dempsey, Vice President, Science and Technology, Bemis Co.

I. G. Snyder, Director, Applied R&D, Dow Chemical

Chester D. Szymanski, Corporate Vice President, R&D, National Starch and Chemical Co.

D. B. Rogers, General Director, R&D, DuPont Electronics

Walter L. Robb, Senior Vice President, Corporate R&D, General Electric

F. B. Sprow, Vice President Corporate Research, Exxon Research and Engineering Co.

S. Allen Heininger, Corporate Vice President, Resources Planning, Monsanto Co.

Grady W. Harris, Vice President, R&D, Hollister Co.

Daniel Farkas, who wrote in a private capacity

John Maselli, Vice President, Corporate R&D, Planters Lifesavers

Pro-SSC responses, Ritter said, were received from:

Warren Offutt, Vice President, Technical Management, Eaton Corp.

Robert Calcaterra, Director, R&D/Quality Assurance, Adolph Coors

Robert Stratton, Director, Central Research Laboratory, Texas Instruments

Florence Metz, General Manager, New Ventures, Inland Steel

The anti statements reported by Ritter were emphatic. For example, J. J. Wise, of Mobil, was quoted as stating, "Considering the tradeoffs that would have to be made to pursue the scientific possibilities of the SSC, I do not feel that the construction of the SSC can be justified at this time."

Walter L. Robb, of GE, was quoted as writing, "Investing more heavily in this area, when there are so many other high-quality items that need to be funded, simply does not make sense."

Misconduct Update: Cornell Case

What's happened in the case of Jeffery S. Borer, MD, occupant of an endowed chair at Cornell University Medical College, who, after five years of off-and-on investigations, was judged responsible for misstatements in several published scientific reports (SGR Nov. 1, 15, Dec. 1, 1986)?

Nothing much. Though cleared of "intentional misconduct" by a panel of inquiry convened by the National Institutes of Health, Borer was criticized in the panel's report for "lack of attention to study requirements and generally accepted standards of recordkeeping." Following that finding, he was directed last September by NIH to "issue a clarification" concerning acknowledged errors in a paper he co-authored in the *American Journal of Cardiology* in 1984 (SGR Oct. 1, 1987). But the AJC has not published the recommended clarification, though the editor, William C. Roberts, acknowledges receipt of a letter from Borer.

Cornell announced in April that it was undertaking a "special internal review for accuracy of all research manuscripts from Dr. Borer's laboratory for a period of at least one year," as well as other examinations of his work. SGR inquired about the reviews last week and was told by the Cornell public information office that "there are no conclusions" and that the "process is still going on."

The NIH investigation concluded that Cornell's handling of the case, which was brought to its attention in 1981 by Jerome Jacobstein, MD, "created understandable doubts about the institution's willingness to deal with a potential problem." Jacobstein, who subsequently moved from Cornell to Graduate Hospital, Philadelphia, called Cornell's performance a "whitewash." He doggedly pursued the case for six years, spent $13,000 of his own funds in legal fees, and it was only because of his persistance that NIH undertook its investigation.

SGR asked editor Roberts about his journal's failure to correct an error in an article it had published. He replied, "I've got the papers at home. I'll have to take a look at it."

So much for the lullabies about the self-policing, self-cleansing nature of the scientific enterprise.

Annals of Nonsense: Reuters vs. the Ingelfinger Rule

Some wondrously snooty and self-serving pieties are the main ingredients behind the recent spitting match between the best-known medical journal and one of the largest news gathering organizations.

On one side, there's *The New England Journal of Medicine,* lofty in the pecking order of scientific publications. Scientists scheme and labor to get into its pages, which, in the publish-or-perish culture of research, is a virtual guarantee against professional oblivion. On the other side, there's Reuters, the British-owned news service, with hundreds of media clients around the world, including 74 papers in the U.S.

Reuters, like other news organizations, routinely mines the *New England Journal* and other research publications to extract the latest medical news and repackage it for lay readers. The *Journal,* and many of the others, cooperate by sending out "embargoed" press copies a few days ahead of general distribution. The aim is to give reporters time for care in preparing their articles.

Strict Embargo

The *Journal* is uniquely fanatical about the embargo. Its rule against premature release extends not only to the press, but also to scientific authors, who face banishment from the *Journal* if they publicly discuss their work prior to publication. Known as the "Ingelfinger Rule," after the late editor who devised it, the embargo is strictly enforced by the present editor, Arnold Relman. He argues, "Doctors cannot give sound advice on the basis of a broadcast or a newspaper story." Therefore, he insists, the *Journal* should be in the hands of its medical subscribers before the press alerts their patients to the therapeutic developments reported in its columns.

And that's why, Relman says, he has penalized Reuters with six months of no advanced copies for breaking the embargo on the January 28 issue, which reported that an aspirin every other day substantially cuts the frequency of heart attacks in men. Reuters, which stresses coverage of financial and business news, countered that it got the story from business sources interested in the sales implications of the aspirin finding. Piqued by Relman's accusations, the news agency announced that henceforth, it will not honor the *Journal's* embargo. The hint was that a bootlegged copy won't be hard to find.

From a couple of topflight organizations, the conflict has elicited some remarkably low-grade nonsense. Skepticism is due the *Journal's* fears of premature press accounts leaving doctors unprepared for anxious patients. Over 600,000 doctors are in practice in the US, but the *Journal's* domestic sales number only about 200,000. Thus, several hundred thousand physicians see no need to beat their patients to the latest medical research reports. Furthermore, physicians are so deluged with medical literature that falling behind in reading is a common complaint.

Reuters' insistence that the work of the *Journal's* authors is fair game on Reuters' own schedule is an odd contention for an organization that's in the business of selling information. It is doubtful, for example, that Reuters would allow its own staff members to sell the fruits of their work before Reuters got to use it. Why, then, shouldn't the *Journal* control the use of its materials?

Publicity Bonanza

One answer is that much of the research it reports is tax-supported and, therefore, belongs to the public. In addition, medical journals routinely take weeks or months to get important health news into print, whereas newspapers can do it overnight. However, the reason they take so long is that manuscripts are subjected to outside review and careful checking. The process creates the aura of reliability that accounts for the press routinely accepting scientific reports at face value.

If the press wants speedy access to new research findings, it could pursue scientific information with the same vigor that it goes after political scandal. But if it wants to be spoon fed, it should abide by the rules of the feeders. Finally, if Relman and his journal really wish to stamp out embargo busting, there's an easy solution: mail the whole printing at the same time. That might cut into the huge publicity that the *New England Journal of Medicine* reaps from its cozy relationship with the lazy press. But it would help counter the supposedly serious problem of doctors first hearing medical news from their patients.—DSG

To Order or Renew

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station, Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

☐ Renew my subscription; ☐ Check enclosed
☐ Enter my subscription; ☐ Please bill
Institutional subscribers: one year, $225.00 ☐;
two years, $395.00 ☐
(Overseas airmail, $30.00 per year additional.)

Name _____
Address _____
_____ Zip _____

Toll-Free Subscription Service
1-800-522-1970 **In D.C., 785-5054**

Academy Aims for Bigger Role in US-Japan Science Ties

The National Academy of Sciences is staking out a larger role in Japanese-American research relations, an area that's rumbling with difficulties as the two governments continue their marathon disagreement over terms for renewal of the bilateral science pact that expired in 1985 (SGR Dec. 1, 1987).

The NAS activity is independent of the inter-governmental negotiations, which have been so mangled by the jingoist White House Science Office that it now seems likely that the Japanese will sit tight and wait out the Reagan Administration.

In what was described by an NAS official as "upgrading of the function," the Academy has appointed Martha Harris, a Japanese-affairs specialist at the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment since 1982, as the first fulltime Director of the NAS Office of Japanese Affairs. Harris, a PhD in political science, is fluent in Japanese. The NAS Office was established last year and has been headed on an acting basis by Mitchell B. Wallerstein, a senior staff member in the NAS Office of International Affairs. In addition to encouraging Japanese-American scientific relations, the NAS Japan office will serve as a clearinghouse and meeting ground for American university programs related to Japanese science and technology.

Harris' appointment comes shortly before representatives of the Academy are to meet with a Japanese group to discuss new ground rules for scientific relations. Those discussions, scheduled to begin at the end of March in Hawaii, will focus on clarifying "symmetrical access," a principle that was settled on in 1986 by representatives of the NAS and the Engineering Academy of Japan and the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science.

"Symmetrical access," an alternative to the customary "reciprocity" in bilateral agreements, was devised to reflect the fact that the American side cannot possibly muster the numbers to match Japanese researchers and advanced students in the US. At present, some 13,000 Japanese are enrolled in American universities, mostly in science and engineering, while fewer than 1000 Americans are studying in Japan. Furthermore, there's no great rush of Americans to fill long-term visiting appointments that are increasingly available in Japanese laboratories. The dearth is attributable to American indifference to language studies and anxieties about jobs and career development.

The US government negotiators, headed by William R. Graham, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, have been demanding that the Japanese do more to make it easier for Americans to look in on the Japanese research community. The Japanese, in fact, had long been sticky about access to some of their elite research centers, but in recent years, under threats and pressure, have been opening the doors—only to find few Americans actually interested in entering.

A Trend to Language Studies?

A hint of change in regard to Japanese-language skills among American students comes from the American Electronics Association, which represents some 3500 firms.

Over the past four years, the AEA has sponsored a program to send American master's- and doctoral-degree students to Japan to work for 9 to 12 months in Japanese industrial laboratories. According to Pat Hill Hubbard, AEA Vice President, this year brought out the largest crop of applicants, 55, and the highest proportion with some Japanese-language training, 40 percent.

Hubbard says the program, financed by AEA member firms with assistance from NSF and half of travel costs paid by Japanese companies, has funds this year for only 11 of the applicants to go to Japan. Japanese firms, she told SGR, are eager to have them and many more slots than candidates are available.

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS INC.
SERIALS ACQUISITIONS
300 N. ZEEB RD.
ANN ARBOR, MI 48106